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UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA 33608-7001

FOREWORD

(U) In many ways Soviet helicopter tactics have matured in Afghanistan. Throughout the war, helicopters have played a significant role in combatting Mujahedin forces, especially while conducting heliborne assaults and close in fire support/close air support (CAS). These missions have been effective, but only during daylight hours.

(U) In this paper we have focused our attention entirely on exhibited capabilities of Soviet helicopters and aircrews, ignoring both popular assessments and postulations. Although our effort concentrated on combat operations in Afghanistan, we also took a careful look at on-going training in Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG), to get a more accurate perspective of their nighttime capabilities.

(U) This document is the product of the US Central Command Afghan Fusion Cell and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Department of Defense, JCS or USCINCCENT.

Comments and questions regarding this study are welcomed and encouraged. Address correspondence to USCENTCOM, ATTN: CCFC, MacDill AFB, Florida 33608-7001; or call AV 968-6580/6568, KY 9287, or NSTS 991-6172.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas A. Loken', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

THOMAS A. LOKEN
Col., USAF
Chief, Fusion Cell

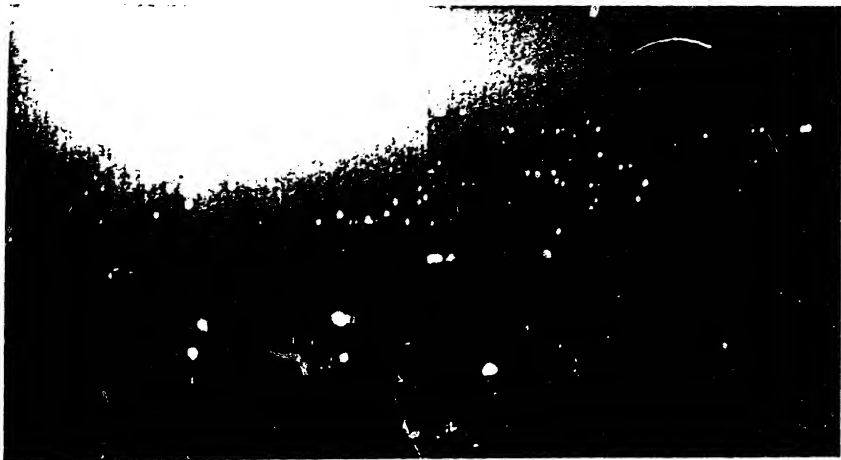
PART II: BACKGROUND

(U) **DOCTRINE.** Soviet war-fighting doctrine states that its forces must be prepared to conduct night offensive operations. Accordingly, the Soviets consider night combat a regular feature of the combined arms battlefield. In order to maintain the tempo of offensive combat, they believe ground forces must continuously apply pressure on the enemy. Soviet doctrine also recognizes the difficulties associated with combat at night: navigation, accuracy of supporting fires, maneuver and command and control are all degraded. Historically, the Soviets have taken pride in being able to employ forces in night conditions that other combatants might choose to avoid. In World War II night combat accounted for over 40 percent of total Soviet combat time. They conducted night operations more often and on a larger scale than any other participant. Currently, Soviet military publications are devoting more articles to night combat. Some of these articles have indicated dissatisfaction with current proficiency and training levels.

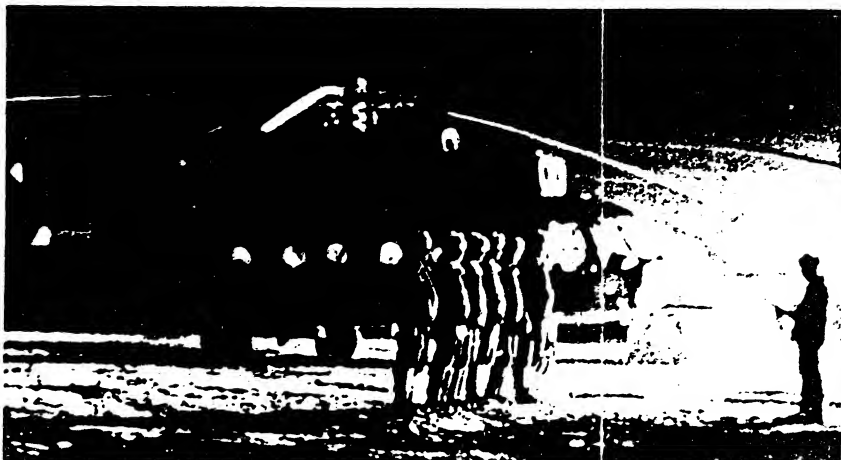
PART IV: NIGHT VISION DEVICES

(U) While NVG certainly have advantages over the naked eye, they still possess limitations. The field of view is significantly reduced and the ability to fly with NVG must be learned through training. Due to the 40 degree field of view of the goggles, peripheral vision is not used to maintain reference with objects located to the side of the flight path. It is essential that a wide field scan be used.

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(U) Airfield security missions are used to identify Mujahedin firing locations. This picture depicts a surface to surface rocket fired into Kabul.



(U) Soviet aircrews preparing for a night mission.

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SOVIET NIGHT HELICOPTER OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN



AFGHANISTAN

SOVIET NIGHT HELICOPTER OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

FOREWORD

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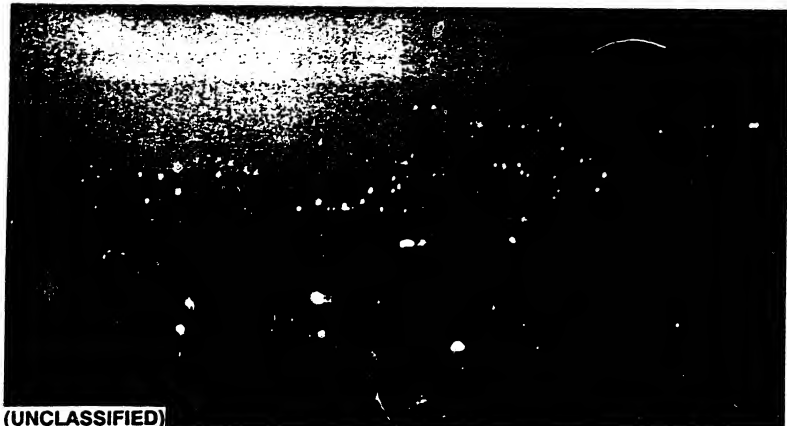
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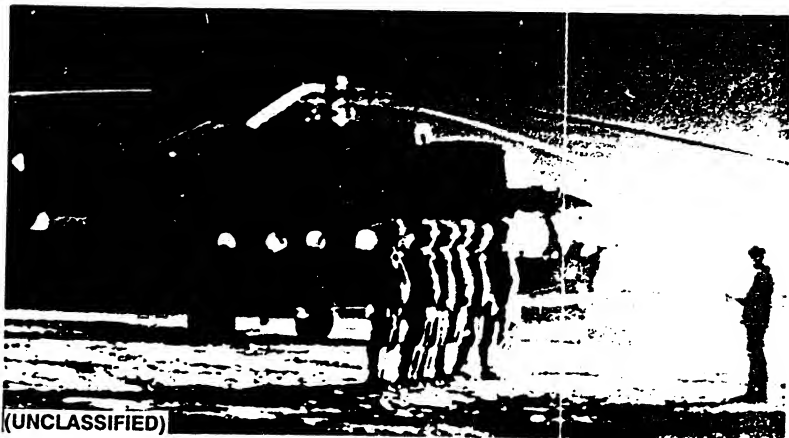
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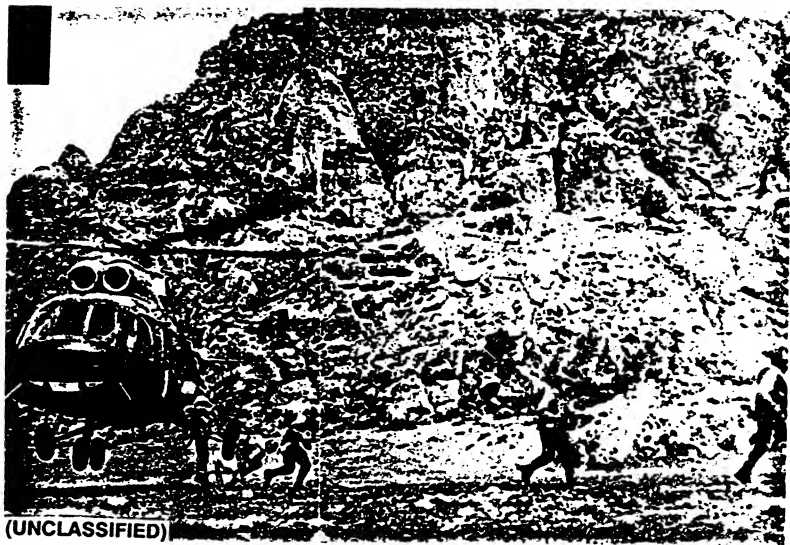
(U) Airfield security missions are used to identify Mujahedin firing locations. This picture depicts a surface to surface rocket fired into Kabul.



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(U) Soviet aircrews preparing for a night mission.

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(UNCLASSIFIED)

(U) Heliborne operations have played a major role in the mountainous terrain found throughout most of Afghanistan.

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(U) Also unknown is the level of night proficiency pilots have when they first arrive in Afghanistan. We do know that Soviet open press articles suggest that improvements are needed, especially in the areas of flying at night and in mountainous terrain. On paper, the Soviets realize the importance of night flying. Pilot certification is based in part on night flying. However, sources who watch Soviet helicopter training in East Germany indicate most night activity is very basic and is utilized to maintain proficiency rather than improving it. In Afghanistan, we have not seen an effort made to improve and fine-tune skills in order to conduct night offensive operations.

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